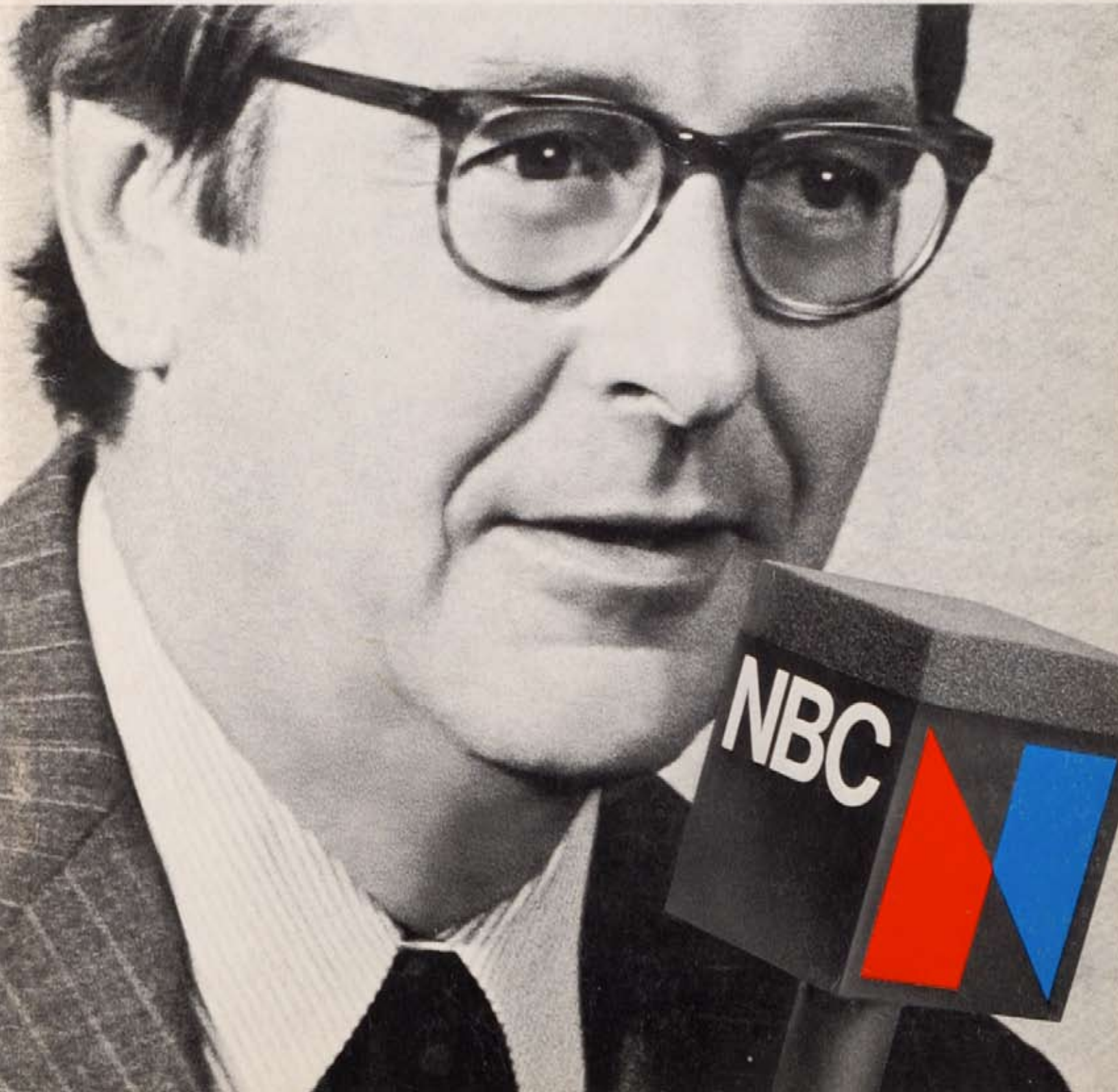
Sense 74

A Marketing, Communications and Design Publication
of Lippincott & Margulies, Inc.

The New NBC



Cover:
NBC's John Chancellor at microphone displaying the company's new corporate symbol.

Right:
NBC President Herbert S. Schlosser (right) and Walter P. Margulies.

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The NBC Corporate Identification Program

The achievements of the National Broadcasting Company are recorded over a long and celebrated corporate history. As the leading pioneer in radio and television broadcasting, NBC is one of the best-known companies in the United States.

However, it has undertaken a major identification program designed to significantly improve its perception by important publics.

For a company as successful and recognized as NBC, the question must be asked, "Why change?" The answer might be found in a statement by former Coca-Cola board chairman Lee Tally when asked why his company, marketers of perhaps the most famous product in the world, was working with Lippincott & Margulies to revamp the soft drink's entire brand image. In one sentence, Mr. Tally caught the significant difference between forward-looking, successful companies, and those content to stay with the status quo. He said, "Management must know when a tradition is good, when it must be modified, and when it must be abandoned."

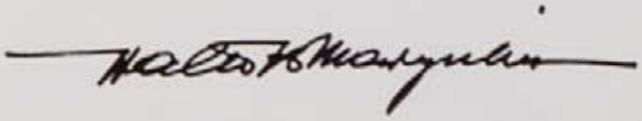
The management of NBC, certainly respectful of tradition, felt that the overall image of the National Broadcasting Company as a modern, dynamic organization was not being adequately projected. NBC's image was fragmented, it was felt, somewhat blurred among the company's varied publics.

A goal was set by NBC management and Lippincott & Margulies to create a unique and innovative identification that would serve as a hallmark for the company, and also function as a viable marketing tool for its broadcasting operations. An identity was needed that would make NBC stand out from the alphabet-soup milieu of its competition.

This issue of *Sense* details the considerable work that went into the NBC corporate identification program, along with the rationale for its major elements. We are pleased that NBC, one of the world's leading communications companies, selected Lippincott & Margulies to develop the entire program. It is one of which we are proud, and one we feel will be firmly established in the consciousness of the country.

We hope you find the NBC story interesting and helpful, as you, perhaps, compare its results to your company's look. Mr. Tally's statement is, of course, applicable to any corporation that wishes to stay ahead in its field.

We are interested, as always, in your comments and observations, and encourage you to share with us your thoughts on the ideas examined in this and other issues of *Sense*.



President
Walter P. Margulies

Great events and leading personalities covered by NBC since 1926 are pictured along the bottom of the pages throughout this issue.

Toward a New Look at NBC

Dynamic leadership is an abiding tradition at NBC.

Today, the company is on the threshold of a new era in the history of the communications world it has done so much to fashion and develop.

Justifiably proud of its pioneering record and many significant achievements, NBC also recognizes that images that speak in terms of a time past, no matter how illustrious, cannot in any way communicate the excitement and competitive thrust that mark the NBC of today.

It was the need to create a corporate identification which would reflect its forward-looking sense of purpose that brought NBC to Lippincott & Margulies for assistance.

Paradoxically, NBC's need for a corporate identity program stemed from the major contributions of its past fifty years which formed an image of history and tradition, but obscured its thrust to the future. It became identified with a position of past leadership, a company in the vanguard of former great cycles of broadcasting growth. Its future was not seen in its impressive past record—founding network radio, initiating monochrome television, building television networking, introducing color, and developing many of the program forms that have become part of today's broadcasting.

With this background and history, and with the variety of its efforts in broadcasting service, NBC's overall image as an energetic, contemporary, forward-looking company became diffused. It lacked the unifying element to bring it all into focus. While individual programs, for example, have been perceived as outstanding successes, no strong and clear identifying visual vocabulary existed to forge a link in the public mind between NBC and its programs.

NBC also experienced identity problems unique to a network broadcaster, such as reconciling the diverse requirements of the NBC television stations and NBC affiliates, which reflect both network programming of value to the national community, and local programming attuned to a particular area's needs and interests.

Thus, the need for a corporate identification program that would reflect and enhance the new, more vigorous, competitive stance of NBC became a top priority as the company entered its second half-century of operation.

A Heritage of Pioneering

In 1926, listeners in more than half of America's four million radio-equipped homes tuned in to the inaugural program of the newly organized National Broadcasting Company. It was to be an event of significance in the history of communications.

Carried by 25 stations in 21 cities, the program featured the finest talent available to radio in the mid-Twenties: the Metropolitan Opera from New York; Mary Garden from Chicago; Will Rogers picked up from Independence, Kansas; and a number of celebrated orchestras from various locations.

Al Jolson during the early days of radio was one of many, famous entertainers who were first heard on the air over NBC.

The creation of NBC saved radio from infant mortality. The number of stations, which had increased rapidly in the early Twenties, began shrinking by mid-decade. The novelty of radio was wearing thin. Programs were amateurish and schedules inconsistent. Even on major stations in metropolitan centers, programs were based on whatever local talent the stations could muster up.

What was needed was a regular, professional program service. To fill this need, NBC was created. Soon after its formation, the number of stations, which had been declining at an alarming rate, stabilized. Within a year, other networks were on the air and the broadcasting system of the country was founded.

NBC's pioneering program efforts included the historic Saturday afternoon broadcasts of the Metropolitan Opera; the organization of the first full symphony orchestra formed exclusively for the benefit of radio listeners; and the radio debut of such entertainment headliners as Eddie Cantor, Al Jolson, Rudy Vallee, Jack Benny, Groucho Marx, Bob Hope and Bing Crosby.

News reporting, from an early role of minor significance, was developed by NBC into an important part of its service. In 1928, NBC initiated full coverage of national political campaigns, conventions, and elections, bringing the voices of the candidates and the details of the balloting into millions of homes.

The technique of adapting the stage play, the novel and the short story for radio was originated by NBC. In the field of educational broadcasting, the "NBC University of the Air" was established, with pioneering programs on foreign policy and the heritage of America.

Within five years of its inaugural radio network broadcast, NBC commenced operation of an experimental television station, transmitting pictures from an antenna perched atop the Empire State Building in New York. On April 30, 1939, the company inaugurated American television service to the public. Two years later, the New York station received the first commercial license granted by the FCC, but World War II shut down the infant commercial television operation. As soon as the war ended, however, it resumed. By 1947, with six television stations in operation and 14,000 television homes in the country, the NBC Television Network was televising the World Series, the Theatre Guild Drama Series, and the Louis-Walcott fight.

During these early years of television, engineers had given public demonstrations of color pictures produced by all-electronic means. In 1947, members of the FCC witnessed a demonstration of compatible color. It wasn't until 1953, however, that "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie" became NBC's first publicly announced, experimental broadcast of a network program in compatible color. By 1965, NBC-TV had become the first "full color network," offering a total of 27 nighttime programs in color—virtually the entire evening schedule.

The former NBC identification appeared in a variety of formats throughout the company.

These formative years of the television industry, during which most broadcasters were unwilling to take the risks of development, saw NBC making the financial commitments for the research, equipment and talent required to build national coverage. The result of the continuing NBC effort was the creation of a national audience and a national advertising base for television.

In news and public affairs, in live sports coverage, and in the introduction of such new program forms and concepts as the "Today" and "Tonight" shows, the entertainment special, and the breakthrough in news reporting with Chet Huntley and David Brinkley, NBC has continued to pursue ways to develop the potential of broadcasting. Technologically, the company has always been at the forefront.

NBC views its impressive history as but a prologue to the challenges and achievements that lie ahead. It is gearing to meet those challenges with innovation and imagination—with a sense of unified purpose that is aptly symbolized and projected by its new corporate identification program.

The new NBC corporate symbol, keystone of the company's entire identification program, is designed to be compatible with the broadcaster's wide variety of graphic needs. Its look is one of strength and modernity. Although the symbol is essentially an abstract form, the first letter of NBC can be clearly recognized within it.

Strategy for Change

The development of a corporate identification program for NBC was a comprehensive, two-phase assignment. Lippincott & Margulies began with a complete examination of the company's communications practices, including:

A review among network executives, business leaders, station managers and opinion makers in each of the nation's major marketing areas;

Discussions with senior executives of the company and its divisions, and meetings with field executives to examine local marketing and communications problems;

An examination of on-air advertising, network identification elements and background reports by management planning groups.

NBC

NBC Sports

NBC Radio Network

On the home screen, the new NBC corporate symbol appears with the call letters and channel numbers of NBC stations and affiliates. The on-air signature format emphasizes the local channel numbers and meets the needs of regional tune-in promotion, while projecting a clear, bold NBC presence and style. If the symbol needs to be reduced in size on air to accommodate station identification, or when program promotions are carried on the lower-third of the screen, the bold image of the symbol is not diluted. It also is designed to overcome television screen distortions caused by transmission or reception problems.

Out of this intensive research grew the recommendations for a communications strategy which would properly reflect NBC's position in the competitive world of network broadcasting. To achieve a more vibrant and visually arresting look, one that would strongly and clearly identify NBC to its diverse publics, Lippincott & Margulies made specific recommendations for the company, its operating divisions, and its stations and affiliates.

1.
NBC should make a strong commitment to an organized, long-range corporate identification program.

2.
The company's legal name, the National Broadcasting Company, should be retained, but its use minimized. On the other hand, the communicative name, NBC, should be widely promoted.

4
WNBC-TV NEW YORK
SONY

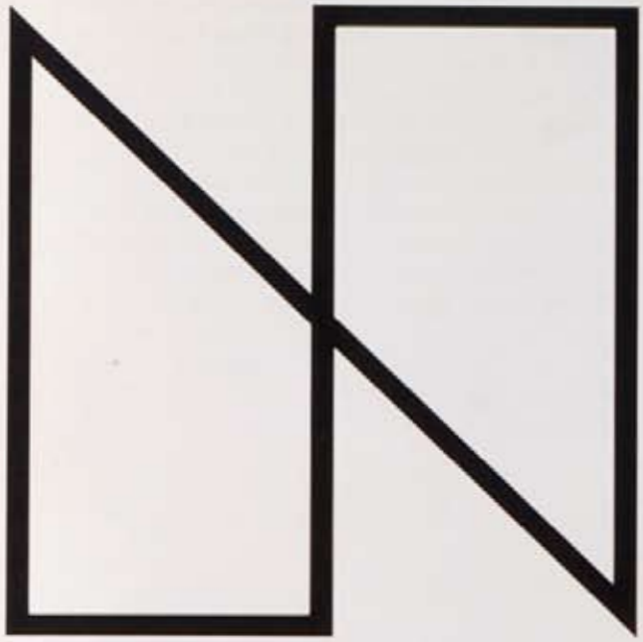
The NBC symbol is extremely versatile. Depending on graphic requirements, a bold effect is created by using the symbol in a solid version; or, a light, airy impression is given with an outline version. For heightened, dramatic effect, a multi-colored, "spectrum" version can be utilized. The tonal version in black and white is available for printed materials. Also, the borders of the symbol's distinctive shape can serve as a frame for news, sports or other appropriate pictures, creating, in effect, an infinite variety of possible versions. However used, the look and versatility of the company's new symbol bespeaks the excellence for which NBC strives in all its programming.

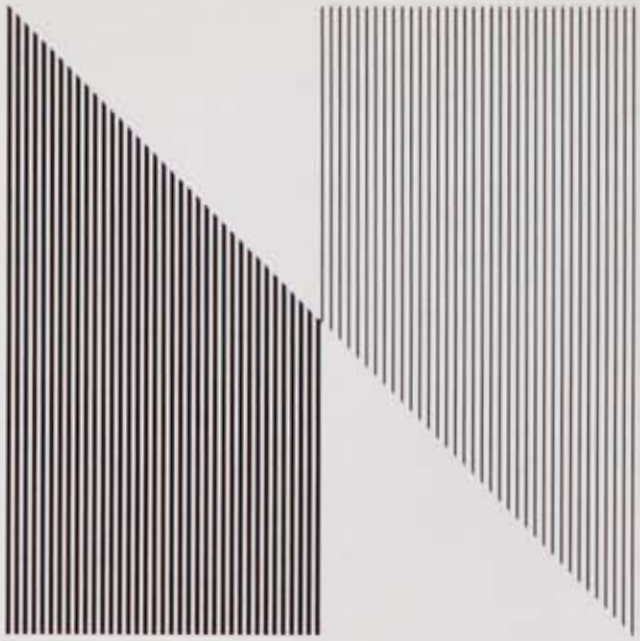
3.
A simple, strong, distinctive and versatile graphic symbol should be created to identify NBC in all its aspects.

4.
A corporate graphic system should be developed around the new symbol, and a means devised to relate it effectively to entertainment, news, sports, specials and individual stations.

5.
An effective organizational structure should be created to coordinate and implement all aspects of communications. As the new NBC graphic system is brought into use, guidelines should be prepared for its implementation throughout the company.

The entire corporate identification program would help meet the essential challenge faced by NBC in its efforts to provide cohesiveness in its identity practices, amid a very diverse mix of programming.



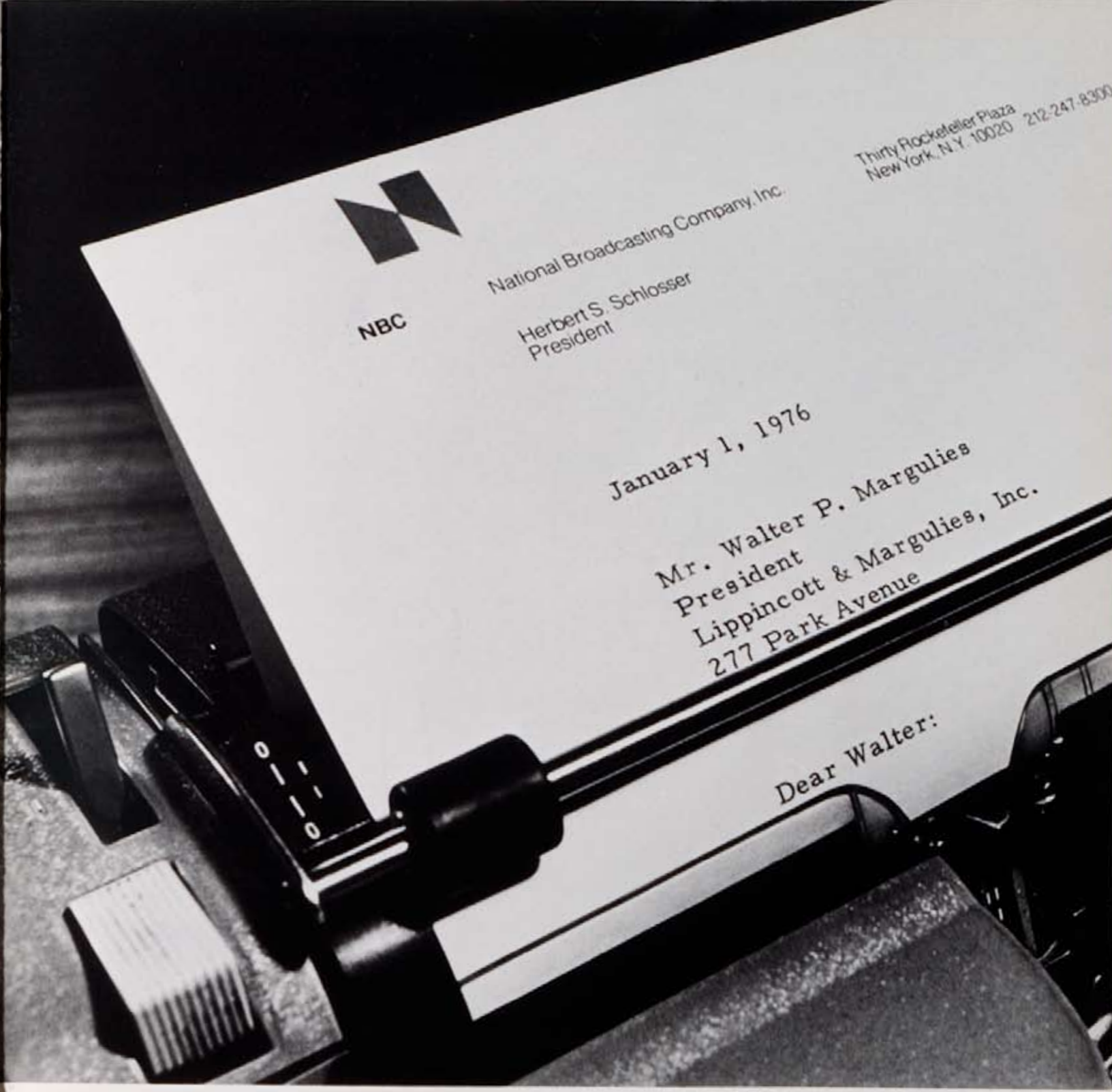


As a broadcaster NBC operates over the airwaves, but as a business it runs on paper. The graphic system developed for the company's stationery and business forms constitutes a key element in NBC's total corporate identification program. The design of the corporate stationery—featuring either a dignified, embossed symbol, or a more promotional symbol engraved in color—presents all necessary business information in a distinctive, yet flexible format. The business forms developed by Lippincott & Margulies help organize the gathering of information. In general, NBC's forms will be simplified and made easier to use, particularly for new employees. Redundant forms will be eliminated. Clear identification of both NBC and the form title is stressed. The new graphic system gives a family look to the variety of forms and reflects the sound, business organization of NBC.

The Total System

Following NBC's adoption of recommended proposals, Lippincott & Margulies entered upon the second phase of its assignment—the creation of a total identification system, the keystone of which would be a new corporate symbol.

The ways in which NBC had identified and displayed itself in the past did not accurately reflect its dynamic, forward-looking spirit. There was inconsistency in graphics, logotypes, and promotional and advertising materials, plus little centralized quality control over these elements. Wide variations in graphic styles existed within divisions, and even within individual stations, thus negating the very concept of corporate identity. The existing NBC symbol also lacked the design strength and flexibility to serve the varied identification needs of the company.


NBC
National Broadcasting Company, Inc.
Herbert S. Schlosser
President
Thirty Rockefeller Plaza
New York, N.Y. 10020 212-247-8300
January 1, 1976
Mr. Walter P. Margulies
President
Lippincott & Margulies, Inc.
277 Park Avenue
Dear Walter:

NBC

The great variety of interior and exterior signs displayed throughout NBC's network of nationwide facilities required solutions to specific perception and production requirements. The new signs are designed to communicate many kinds of information within a readable and technically flexible framework. Primary identification signs carry a variety of NBC organizational signatures, presented with bold typography for impact. Informational signs maximize legibility and are positioned uniformly to aid the viewer and to carry strong NBC identification. In short, the new sign system, a natural extension of the overall identification system, enhances NBC's communications to employees and visitors.

In creating the new corporate identification symbol, Lippincott & Margulies kept certain critical criteria uppermost in mind. The symbol would have to function as the hallmark of a major business enterprise and have the greatest possible visual impact on audiences. It would also have to function as a linking element between the corporation and its operating divisions. It must work within a variety of programming—in news as a supportive and enhancing element, conveying reliability and believability; in sports to suggest action and excitement; in entertainment to generate anticipation and pleasure. For NBC-owned stations, the symbol would provide a new identifier. And in all, the symbol would have to project, clearly and unmistakably, a strong image of NBC. It would also have to prove compatible with local marketing environments and accommodate itself to differences among regions and markets. The symbol must achieve just the right degree of emphasis, neither overshadowing stations nor minimizing NBC. Finally, the separate problems of radio had to be considered. The symbol would have to work with printed materials for rock stations, news stations, and country-music stations.

WKYC-TV
3

K
A
SOUTH
WAS

NBC technical units provide on-site, world-wide coverage of news, sports and special events. This represents a unique opportunity to display NBC's new corporate identification to millions of television viewers, live audiences and spectators. Thousands of pieces of equipment—cameras, mini-cameras, vans, microphones, even helicopters—will carry the new corporate symbol. Bold and clear news and sports signatures are easily recognized across the great distance of a football stadium, in the midst of a frenetic convention hall, or in the visual confusion of an undisciplined news event, projecting a broadcaster deeply involved in the day's events.

Creating the key element, the symbol, was only the first step to be taken. Lippincott & Margulies had then to work out the entire corporate identification system—supplementary logotypes for NBC News and NBC Sports, which would project the particular character of these programs while remaining compatible with the NBC symbol; selected graphics that would be used with division names, program titles, advertising signatures, on-air advertising, stationery, forms, signs, uniforms, vehicles and hardware; and, finally, typestyles for use in station call letters and channel numbers in television, and for dial numbers in radio. All must be compatible with the NBC symbol.

And to insure the continuing effectiveness and quality control of the program as a dynamic factor in NBC's new competitive stance, the company centralized responsibility for its continuing implementation in one design department and provided for coordination through one corporate office.

The total corporate identification program is a distinctive reaffirmation of NBC's commitment to excellence in broadcasting. With its new graphic and identity system, the company now projects a clear and consistant image throughout the world.

The new program, in short, reflects the dynamism of the nation's oldest, major broadcaster.

1
NBC

Readers of this issue will find the following of special interest:

Sense 73
Environmental Marketing Design:
The New Discipline For Heating Up Sales

Marketing's newest professional discipline is explained, with six detailed case histories, in this L&M survey of how innovative businessmen nationwide are working to increase sales by creating total selling environments.

Sense 72
Closing The Image Gap

How a well-executed corporate identity program can provide a distinct competitive edge and save communications dollars. A detailed account of the importance and benefits of FMC's new corporate identity program. Also, thumbnail case histories of American Express, United Technologies, Pizza Hut, NBC Bicentennial, Handy Andy, Rainier Bank.

Sense 71
Communicating Credibility to Financial Audiences

When credibility plunges, P/E ratios suffer, and problems multiply. What is the answer? Are the customary public relations techniques sufficient, or is a new approach needed, one that comprehends a company's total stance and positioning? An informative essay is bolstered by personal interviews with leading financial authorities.

Sense 70
The New Shape of Financial Services

An overview of the changes taking place in the financial services field including banks, savings & loan, brokerage houses, investment banks, insurance and finance companies. Also shows what many financial firms are doing communicatively to sharply differentiate themselves from competition.

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The New NBC

Dear Mr. Moran:

I am interested in:

- ☐ hearing more about L&M's work first-hand. At no obligation, of course. Please call for an appointment.
- ☐ further information on the subject of Corporate Identity
- ☐ further information on Financial Communications Planning
- ☐ further information on Enviromental Marketing Design

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LM

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